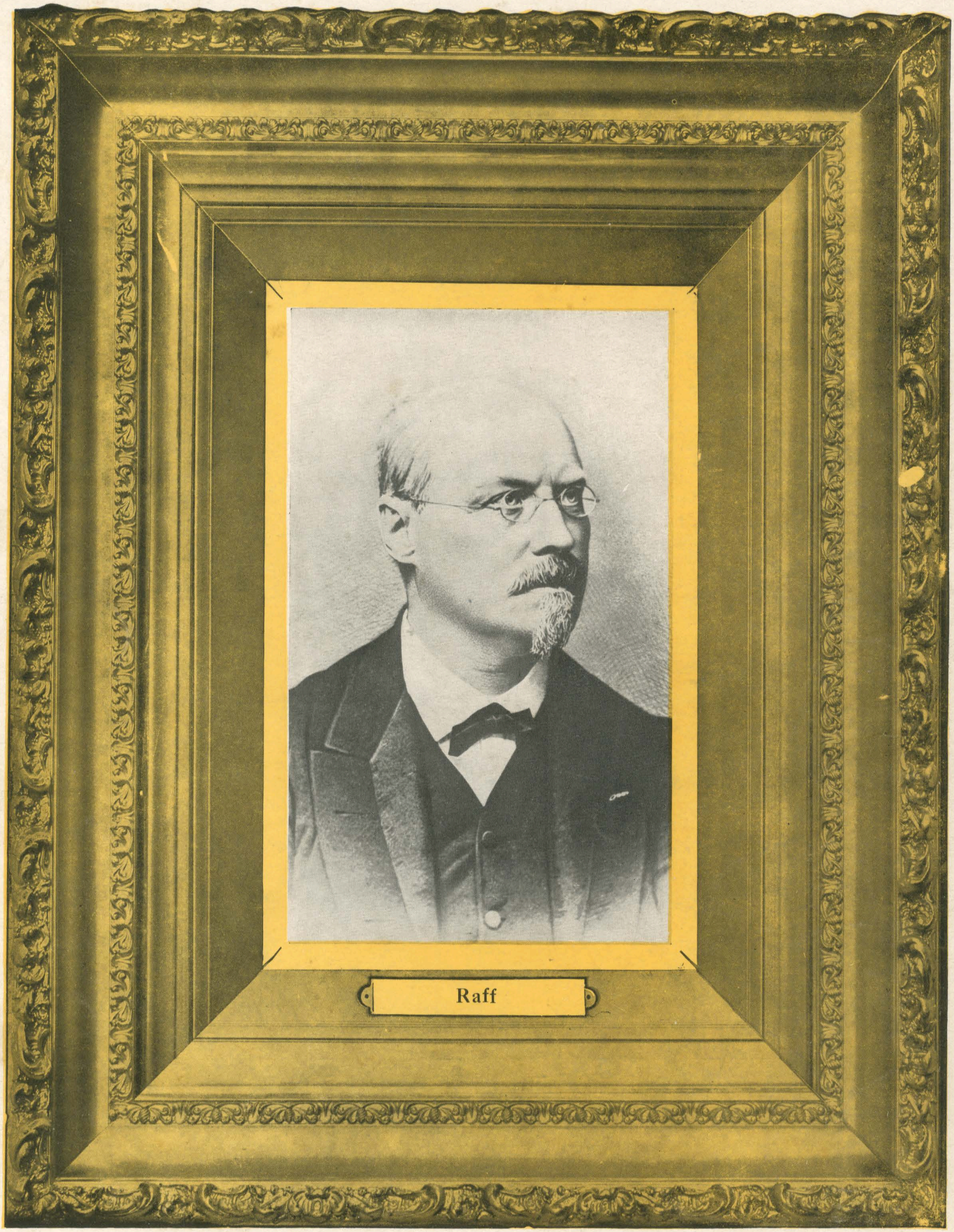

Raff

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THE SPINNER
LA FILEUSE

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:—JOSEPH JOACHIM RAFF (räf).

Born at Lachen, (near Lucerne), Switzerland, May 27, 1822.
Died in Frankfort on the Main, Germany, June 24, 1882.

JOACHIM RAFF, as composer, musical writer, teacher and man, occupied a position in the musical life of his own times which now is difficult to realize. Raff was born at Lachen, on Lake Zurich, in Switzerland, the son of the town organist, who, like many other musicians, preferred that his son should follow almost any other profession than that of a musician; since the limitations of the profession in those days he fully well knew; and he did not realize that his son might chance to possess a genius and overmastering inclination for music, making any other career impossible.

Therefore the young Joachim was sent to school, and later to the Jesuit College at Schwyz, near Lucerne, where he much distinguished himself, carrying off prizes in German, Latin and mathematics. Meantime he was diligently exercising himself in violin playing and upon the organ, under such instruction as he could command. His father not being able to continue his support farther, he left school and took up the work of a school master. Still he went on diligently practicing music and composing, although as yet he had not had any instruction at all in this branch of art. He even had the courage to send some of his compositions to Mendelssohn, at Leipsic, who thought so well of them that the Leipsic house of Breitkopf and Haertel published them in 1844, the young composer being twenty-two years of age. Schumann thought so well of them that he gave them a nice notice in his New Journal for Music, and declared that while, of themselves, they were by no means strong compositions, they contained ideas which would seem to promise a future for the young man as composer.

Two years later Liszt met Raff, while on a concert tour in Switzerland, and as was his habit he instantly recognized the talent of the young man, his ignorance, and the intense unsuitability of his immediate surroundings, when the future of his work as composer was taken into account. Accordingly he invited Raff to go "upon the road" with him, as companion, during a concert tour he was just then undertaking. Liszt undoubtedly recognized the rare mental powers of Raff, his facility in music, and saw how much he needed a sounder criticism upon his efforts. Accordingly Raff accepted this invitation from the then "Prince of Music," and went with Liszt as far as Cologne. Here he had a certain amount of letter acquaintance with A. W. Dehn, at that time editing a musical periodical called *Caecilia*, published by the Schott Sons at Mayence, the same established and edited for eleven years by Gottfried Weber. From the articles Raff had sent him, Dehn had conceived his correspondent as an accomplished musician of at least forty years of age; what was his astonishment, therefore, to find him this modest, but rather insistent young man of twenty-four.

At Cologne, Raff met Mendelssohn, who saw his talent and urged him to come to Leipsic for the instruction he needed and his own companionship. This Raff meant to do, but early the next year Mendelssohn died, and in place of going to Leipsic, Raff soon after followed Liszt to Weimar, where Liszt gave him an appointment (with very little salary) as a sort of private secretary—a young man not afraid of work, able to carry out from a few fragmentary sketches the Master's suggestions with reference to producing an orchestral score from a meagerly indicated pianoforte copy. In this way he worked for Liszt for several years, especially, the late Dr. Mason used to say, during Liszt's work on his first symphonic poem. In the "Preludes," Mason said Raff made many clever suggestions of orchestral

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features which have pleased all the world since. This is all the more remarkable, inasmuch as Raff at that time had not had any experience as orchestral conductor, nor had he composed any of the famous orchestal works which made so much noise a few years later. Mason said that after he had written a movement in this way, Liszt used to press Raff to get the parts copied out for the instruments, and rush down to the opera house and have the orchestra play them over, so that he could judge for himself as to the value of some of the new ideas.

Raff very early became an admirer of the music of Wagner, and when Liszt had determined to bring out "Lohengrin" at Weimar, Raff lent excellent work with his pen, in preparing announcements for the press, letters to distant papers about the novelties in this remarkable work, and a general discussion of the musical questions underlying the question whether the Wagner music was an advance, or simply a retrogression. Of course Raff, like all the Weimar contingent shared Liszt's view of the new direction. Accordingly he stirred up a great controversy in the musical world, about this time, by his rather large pamphlet, "The Wagner Question" (*Die Wagnerfrage*). Moreover, he is supposed to have had more than a little to do with many articles which in published form were signed by the then powerful and attention-arresting name of Liszt. The ideas, no doubt, were those of Liszt, who knew better than any other musician how to seize the center of a musical question and state it so graphically that the mere statement was equivalent to a demonstration.

In 1856 Raff removed to Wiesbaden and became teacher in the conservatory there; he also married a singer and actress who was engaged in the opera house there. Later he removed to Frankfort-on-the-Main, (in 1877) where he became director of the Royal conservatory. There he died having had the musical direction of the leading conservatory of each town in turn. In Mason's "Musical Memories" he tells of his visiting Raff at Frankfort in 1880, and of his reception by this then distinguished composer and master.

In the Weimar days Raff was intensely poor, his compositions bringing him in very little, and his salary from Liszt being but little more than the deacon's charity, which he described as being "nothing to nobody." On one occasion he was arrested and locked up for debt. Mason says that the room where he was locked up was much better than his regular lodging; and that, probably by Liszt's help, a piano was sent in, a desk, a chair and paper and pens, and Raff passed his days in his usual manner, composing incessantly, just as Schubert used to do, finishing one piece after another. The other "boys" with Liszt saw to it that the food supply was maintained at a suitable profusion.

This habit of composition, Raff kept up all through life, and the consequence was that he left a prodigious list of compositions, numbering well above 300. Of these there were eleven symphonies, of which the "In the Forest" and the "Leonore" have lasted best; much chamber music, many songs, several concertos for violin, cello, etc., and orchestra; many cantatas, choruses and the like, occasionally carrying off a prize, as for instance by his symphony "To the Fatherland," offered by the Society of Music Friends.

Of the prodigious list of pianoforte pieces by Raff, only a few are of distinction. Now and then he composed a gem "of purest ray serene." Among these the present tone-poem, "The Spinner," stands high; also his famous Cavatina for violin, a piece without which the violin world would be poor indeed. There are also many operatic arrangements of distinct merit; but the great majority of his pianoforte works were written either to order by a publisher looking for "good sellers," or in the same spirit, seeking himself for the buying lovers of jingle. Later on, no doubt, this immense mass of piano material will be sifted and set in order, and we may expect to find other gems as good as these.

THE POETIC IDEA.—The poetic idea underlying Raff's piano-poem of "The Spinner" is an old one in art; an idea which has fascinated painters, poets, and musicians without number. It is the idea, for instance, which underlies Gounod's "Marguerite," as after her first meeting with Faust, she tries to go on with her daily task at the spinning wheel, spinning her thread, and at the same time singing her old song. "There was a king of Thule," the lines of which she cannot follow consecutively, so seriously does the vision of this fetching young man, Faust, occupy her fancy.

One of Schubert's most beautiful songs is set to a poem by Goethe, "Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel," and one of Mendelssohn's Songs Without Words is a Spinning Song.

All Spinning Songs have two necessary elements. There must be a melody such as a soprano singer might sing, a melody with real pathos and charm; and in connection with this an accompaniment in quick motion suggesting the whirring of the wheel. A famous Spinning Song by Litolff, very popular fifty

years ago, violates both these principles, inasmuch as the melody is set for low baritone, and the accompaniment is simply a very rapid and incessant running passage covering two octaves or more. Mendelssohn in his Spinning Song has a soprano melody, and the spinning takes place in the region of the alto. The most poetic of all songs of this character is that of Schubert, in which the spinning accompaniment itself has musical character and life.

Raff, in the present case, had most excellent success. The melody of the singer is one of the most fascinating and beautiful he ever composed, ranking very near the charm of his much played Cavatina for violin. The accompaniment is ingenious, lying in the middle range of the piano, but passing down into the left hand part. The total effect of this Spinning Song, when well played, is most charming. And in addition to the melody itself, in its several stanzas, and the ever-moving accompaniment, Raff has introduced cadenza effects which afford the player an added opportunity.

Nevertheless, the poetic idea must be scrupulously carried out; the melody of the singer carefully sung, with sweetness and charm; the never-stopping "motion" in 16ths sustained with a neatness and delicacy which conceals the art involved and the whole planned like a picture, with its high lights and its moments of obscurity. In short Raff's Spinning Song is at the same moment a song, an effective piano-piece, a picture, and a poem.

FORM AND STRUCTURE.—The Spinning Song is practically in Song-form, the song beginning as Melody D, which is the leading melody of the piece. This melody is repeated entire as Melody K. Melody D is continued by Melody E, which digresses to F Sharp Minor and then (measures 29 to 31) to A Major, continued later in Melody G. This is repeated as Melody H, but with a different ending, and the melody itself is interrupted (measures 49 to 54 inclusive) in order to put in a brilliant cadenza climax.

With Melody I the music begins an interlude on a two measure figure (measures 58, 59 and 60.) Then in Melody J begins a chromatic and very appealing part of the song, which fades into a cadenza, (measures 69 to 73) leading to the return of the principal song as Melody K, in measure 75. Melody L is new matter, based upon the two measure motive (measures 83, 84) repeated later on, a degree lower (measures 85, 86.) Melody M is a repetition of Melody L, but an octave lower. From measure 99 to the end is Coda or conclusion.

The introduction occupies measures 1 to 15 inclusive.

First we have the brilliant passage (measures 1 and 2, which is based upon a chord, G♯—B—D—F♯, the B in the right hand. The high notes not belonging to this chord are what are called "changing notes," that is, notes temporarily taking the place of one of the chord notes. C♯, for instance, takes the place of B; and E takes the place of D. If you study the upper part alone, you will notice that while the right hand thumb remains upon B, the melody plays successively C♯, D, E, D, C♯, and later A♯. Then the arpeggio in measure 2 is upon the chord of C sharp major. Measures 3 and 4 are the same an octave lower, excepting a change in the highest note.

Melody B consists of a strong and finely harmonized chain of chords, (measures 5 to 8.) As several of these cover more keyboard than the hand can reach at once, the shorter ones are "spread," and the longer ones divided differently, by placing the right hand lower than here written (as indicated by the brackets alongside the chord) and playing the topmost note with the left hand, which crosses over for the purpose. The pedal must be used in such a way as to keep these wide chords closely connected (by holding the bass until after the last tone,) and the melody must sing out full and strong. In the right hand the next four, and the left hand the top note.

The passage following is built upon different positions of the diminished chord A—B♯—D♯—F♯, using only three of the notes in each position. The topmost note in the right hand figure is always a changing note a step higher than the true note of the chord. In measure 14 we have the accompaniment figure, which ought to be practiced until it sounds like a mere murmur, yet with every tone in its place.

The cadenza in measures 49 to 54 is built entirely upon the diminished chord D♯—F♯—A—C. The first tone in every right hand figure is a changing note. The right hand part in measures 69, 70 is entirely composed of three-note positions of the diminished chord D—E♯—G♯—B, each three tone position being preceded by a half step below its lowest tone. Thus D—E♯—G♯ is preceded by C♯, a half step below

the D; E♯ is preceded by D double sharp and so on. The three tones of the chord are always the last three of the group of four. Its structure clearly perceived, this passage is easy to learn.

The descending chromatic series, beginning with the high note E natural, at "two" in measure 71, consists of two tones a whole step apart, such as E—D, D♯—C♯, D—C, etc. The student is advised to begin the study of this passage by taking these two tones of the whole step together, one after the other all the way down.

HOW TO STUDY.—In the paragraphs above certain suggestions have been made, incidental to explaining how particular figures have been constructed—that is, what ideas underlie them.

In passing from measure 1 to 2, the student should not delay the time while searching for the new chord. Let him first determine the chord. To that end it is wise to practice measure 2 before practicing measure 1. Measure 4, also will need careful practice, because of the wider skip at the end.

The chords in Melody B, must have a full tone (not loud, but satisfying) and the hands must divide the work as suggested in the paragraph above, and indicated by the brackets beside the notes, and the "l" (for left hand) above certain notes. The time is counted from the moment the melody tone is played, all that precedes the melody being a "spread" or arpeggio effect, anticipating the beat. With reference to the cadenza beginning at C, learn each group of eighth-notes well by itself; then learn to skip from one chord position to the next, by sounding together the first three notes of each group (one with the left hand, and two of the right) and play them quickly in succession as chords, one position after another.

It is indispensable to hold down each melody key its full time, and to connect it legato to the next melody tone. Note particularly that the second phrase begins with the quarter note C Sharp, at "four" in measure 19. Phrase this accordingly. This constant caprice of beginning the melody now upon the count "one" and then upon "four," is important. It breaks up monotony.

In order to grasp the melody clearly, both as to the melody itself and its harmony, it is advisable to play Melody D several times, in the form begun at A below. This form is arrived at by playing at the count "one" all of the left hand notes which belong to the chord, and one or more of the right hand chord notes besides the melody. As the same harmony generally rules the measure, no other chord is to be sounded, but the melody is to be carried through the measure, in strict time and as legato as possible.

This method should be carried out in Melody E and all the melodies later. In these the left hand will play its first three notes, and the right the melody and its two accompaniment notes, all together at "one" as a chord.

In measure 16, for example, the melody tone F♯ must be held down while four 16ths are played under it, and great care must be taken that the 4th finger does not linger upon the E♯ longer than its quarter beat. This particular place is generally played badly, owing to the 4th finger being not so manageable; it therefore remains down too long.

The pedal may be used with each melody note (or rather just instantly after) or it may be used as marked. In the original edition it was marked once all through each measure, which in poor pianos produces confusion, but is the pedaling which the experienced pianist would employ, with a few exceptions —as in measure 18, where the pedal is changed immediately after the third count.

In Melodies E and later, several melody notes have an "l" over them, showing that they are expected to be played by the left hand, crossing over. Every such tone must be held out by the pedal, otherwise the melody will be broken.

The cadenza in measures 49 to 54 must be thoroughly learned. Find the chords from the explanation above (Form and Structure.) The C Natural in measure 49, melody, must be played with great force; the melody is resumed in measure 55. The G♯ whole note in left hand, measure 58, must be held out its full time, as also the bass A under it.

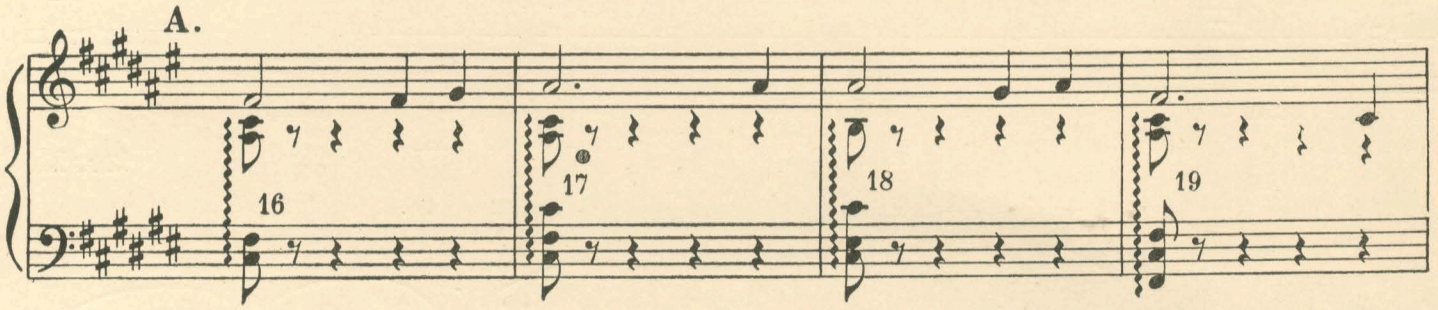
Melody K must be taken up with great delicacy, employing the soft pedal. In measure 83 the soft pedal is released. Soft pedal again in measure 91; released in measure 98. The cadenza, in measures 104 to 107, will be facilitated if the first two 16ths of each group of eight are taken by the left hand.

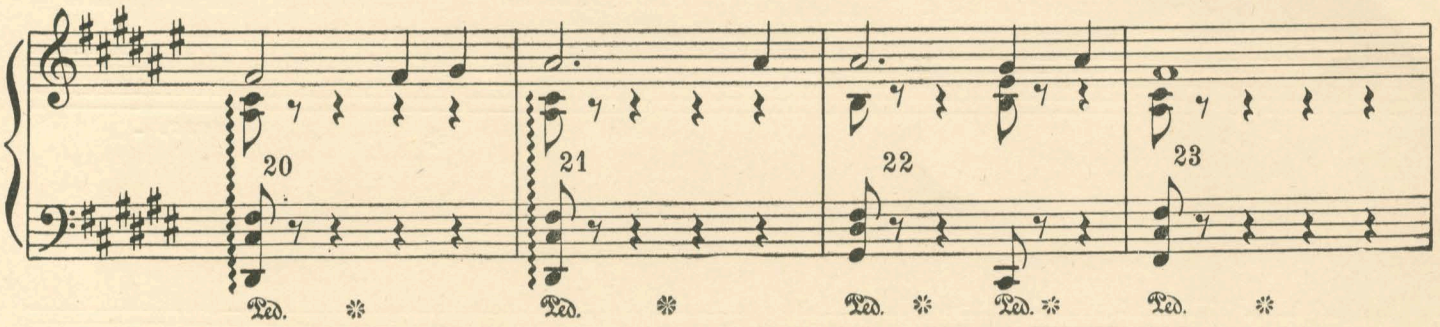
For small hands the following changes may be made: In measure 24 the left hand may cross over to play B (4th beat), because it is much easier so. The pedal must hold this melody note.

Measure 96 the left hand may cross over to play C sharp, at 3d count and again the pedal is necessary to sustain it. In measure 30, the 3d finger on D natural; measure 39, 2d finger twice in succession, then 3d on C sharp; measure 52, the left hand should use 1st finger on A, in each octave going down.

These changes will be found very important simplifications for small hands.

Marks of Expression: Measure 16, "The melody well carried, in songlike effect." Measure 36: "Increase, little by little." Measure 50: "Growing stronger and warming up." That is, increasing and hurrying a little. Measure 60: Hold out the whole note its full time; also the same in measures 57, 58, and 59, Measure 60: "Slow up a little." Measure 61: "In time again." Measure 75: "Very sweetly." "Soft Pedal." Measure 83: "Three strings;" that is, release the soft pedal. Measure 91: "Soft pedal." Measure 110: "Soft pedal." In measures 99 and 101, the mark *f* includes releasing the soft pedal.





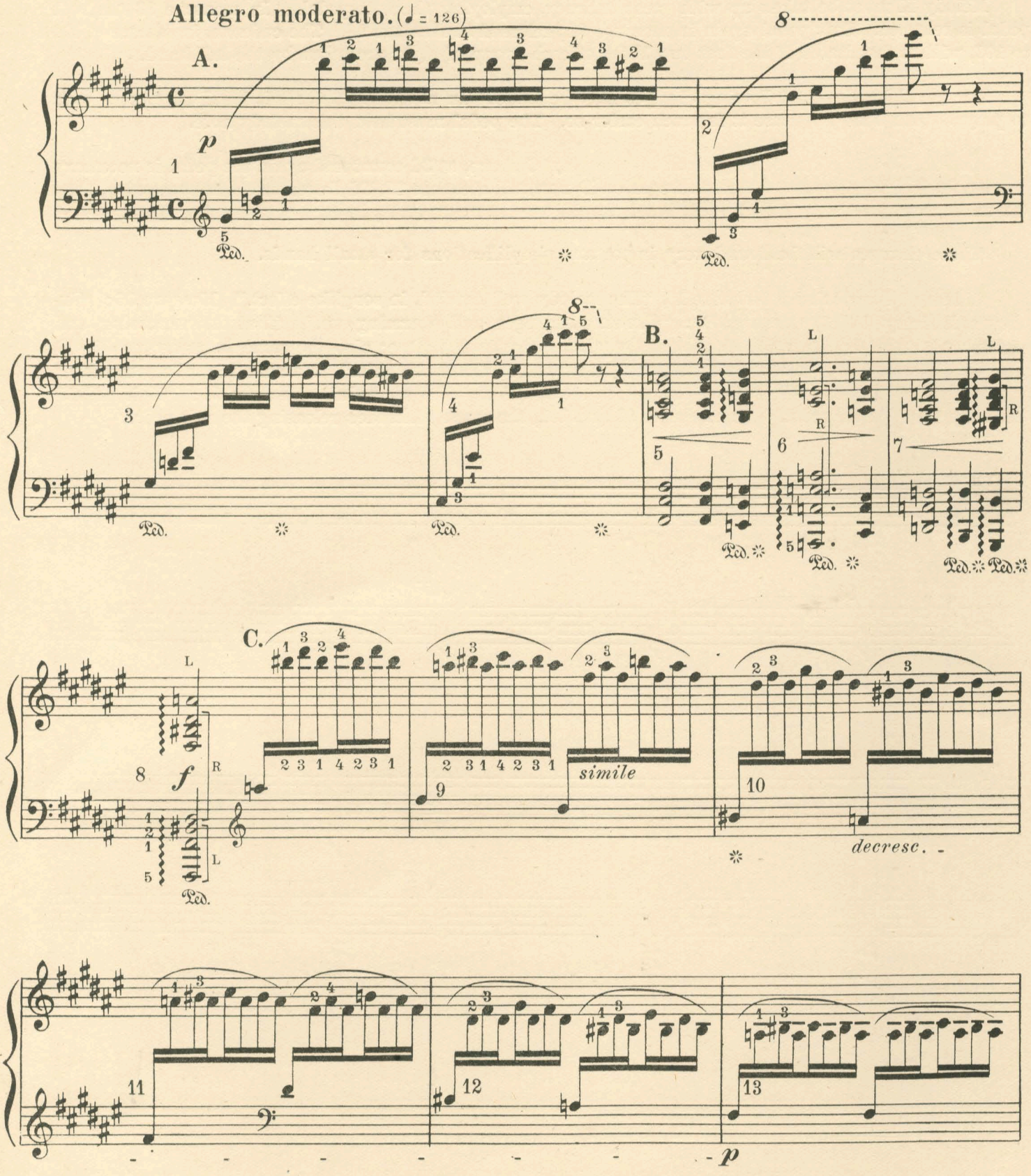
THE SPINNER.

LA FILEUSE.
A Tone-Study.

Revised and annotated by
W. S. B. Mathews.

JOACHIM RAFF, Op. 157.

Allegro moderato. (♩ = 126)



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D.

14 15 16

cantando

17 18 19

20 21 22

E.

23 24 25

26 27 28

4

29 30 31

Ped. Ped. Ped.

F.

pp

32 33 34

Ped. Ped. Ped.

poco a poco cresc.

G.

35 36 37

Ped. Ped. Ped.

f

38 39 40

Ped. Ped. Ped.

p *rfz* H.

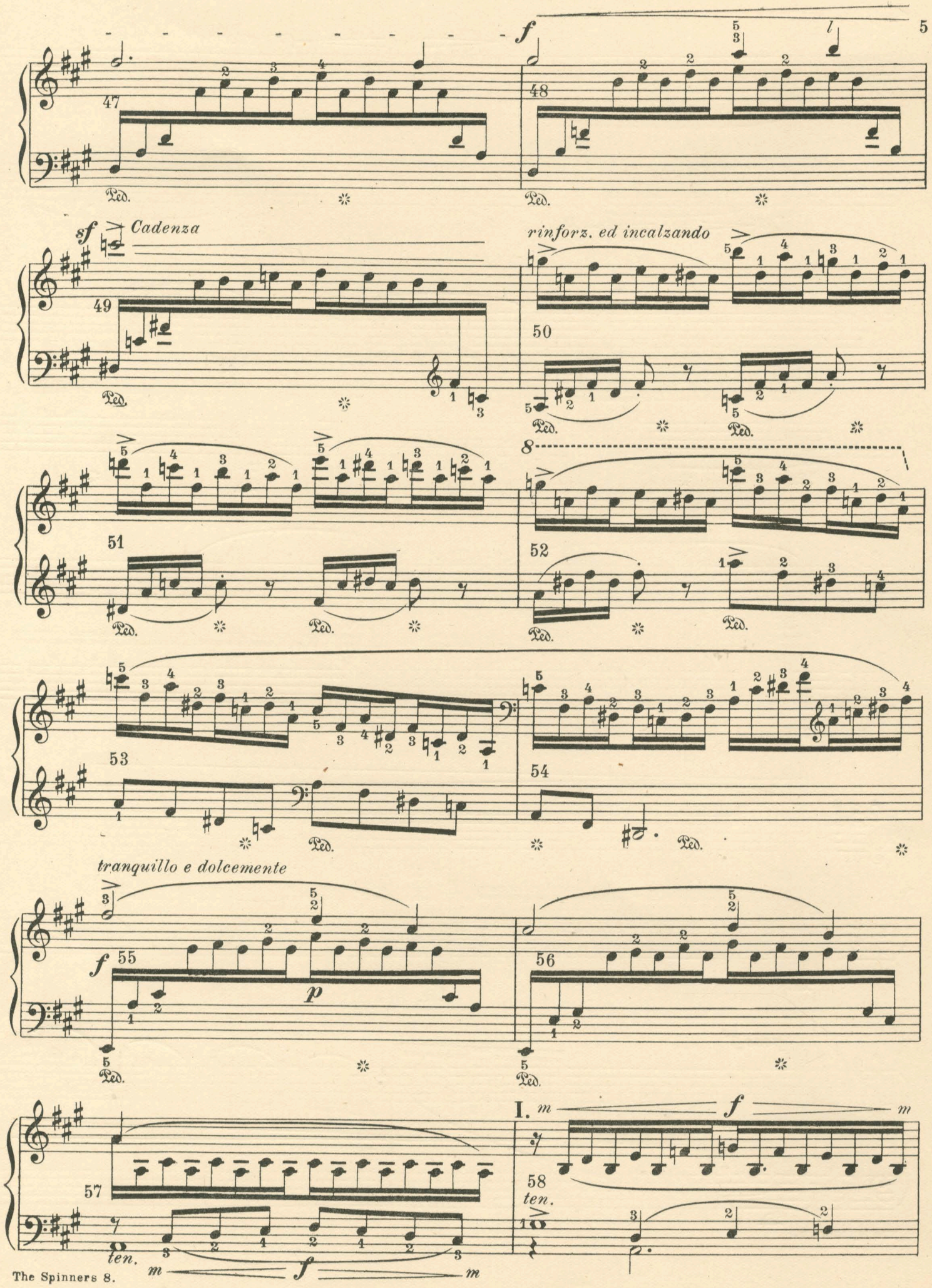
41 42 43

Ped. Ped. Ped.

cresc.

44 45 46

Ped. Ped. Ped.


Cadenza
rinforz. ed incalzando
tranquillo e dolcemente
ten.
I.

59 ten. *p* *m* *p*

60 ten. *poco riten.* *p* *m* *p* *a tempo*

61

62 J.

63 *mf*

64 *pp*

65 *mf*

66 *pp*

67 *mf*

68

69 *poco f*

70

Ped. ✲

f

71

72

73

74

Ped. ✲

dolciss.

K.

pp

75

una cordà

76

Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲

77

78

79

Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲

80

81

82

Ped. ✲ Ped. Ped. ✲

L.

83

tre corde

84

85

Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲

86

87

88

l

Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲

89

90

5 2 4 1 5 2 4 1

M.

pp 91

una corda

Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲

92

93

94

Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲

95

96

l 2

2 2 1 2

97

1 2

Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲ 5 Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲

N. *f*

ten.

98 99 100

tre corde

p

Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲

f *p*

101 102 103

p

Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲

8

104 105 106

Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲

8

107 108 109

Ped. ✲

110 111 112

una corda *riten.* *una corda*

Ped. Ped. ✲

RECITATION QUESTIONS ON RAFF'S "THE SPINNER."

1.—What is the principal Key of this piece? And what the relation of the Chord in the second measure to this Key?
Ans.

2.—In what Keys is the Chord, measures 5 to 7 inclusive?
Ans.

3.—What Diminished Chord (give all its letters) is the foundation of the passage, measures 8 to 10 ?
Ans.

4.—Are the Basses in measures 20 and 21 such as you would expect? If not, what tones would you have expected there?
Ans.

5.—Which notes in the groups in measures 69, 70 belong to the Chord, and which do not? What are the Notes of that Chord?
Ans.

6.—Which Melody of this piece do you like best?
Ans.

7.—Which Melody proved most difficult for you? And why?
Ans.

8.—What is the Measure-Signature, and how many tones to a beat are the rule in this piece?
Ans.

9.—Did you find it any simplification to play the Melody tones with left hand crossed over, where marked?
Ans.

For Teacher's Record

Received _____

Grade (on Scale 100) _____

Teacher _____

Class No. _____

Pupil _____

Address _____

_____